

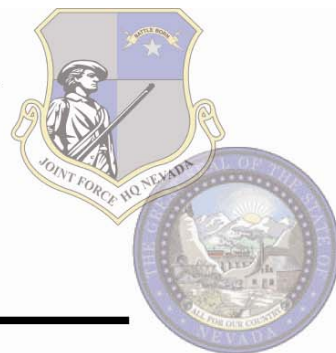
NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New law ensures higher education opportunity for children, spouses of deceased Nevada Guardsmen

By Sgt. 1st Class Erick Studenicka
Joint Force Headquarters, Public Affairs Office

CARSON CITY — Ensuring the opportunity for higher education for the children and spouses of deceased Nevada National guardsmen, Gov. Jim Gibbons signed Assembly Bill 188 here on Wednesday. The bill states effective July 1, 2009, the board of regents of the Nevada higher education system is authorized to waive tuition and fees for any child, widow or widower of a person who was killed while serving in the Nevada National Guard.

The new law also provides tuition coverage for the children and spouses of Guardsmen who are missing in action or prisoners of war. The waiver will be available to the survivors of Guardsmen who were performing any official duty and not limited to combat death-related spouses and children.

The spouses and children of the casualties have 10 years from the time of their relative's death to receive the educational fee waiver or they may request the waiver anytime after their 18th birthday.

Although other states have similar waivers, the need for the Nevada legislation became clear following the Chinook helicopter crash on Sept. 25, 2005, in Afghanistan that took the lives of Nevada Guard soldiers Chief Warrant Officer John Flynn and Sgt. Patrick Stewart. At the time, there was legislation in place for tuition waivers for the dependents of deceased firefighters, police and highway patrol officers but none was in place for deceased Guardsmen.

Tim Tetz, the executive director of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services,

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stressed the significance of the new legislation. Along with the Nevada National Guard, the Office of Veterans Services and the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States were key proponents of the bill.

“The passing of the bill was important because it put into policy the law that guarantees free tuition for the dependents of deceased Guardsmen,” Tetz said.

“Regardless of the changes that may occur in the future, from this point forward, the Guardsmens’ dependents will be taken care of and their relatives’ sacrifice will be recognized.”

Christie Pierce, widow of Flynn, was one of Gibbons’ invited guests for the bill signing ceremony. She has two children, 11 and 9, who will be eligible for the waiver in upcoming years.

“It was an emotional day but it also brought me some peace of mind that the children will have access to higher education,” Pierce said. “I’m grateful to the governor and everyone who worked so hard to enact this legislation.”